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The Smell Of Conspiracy

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JFK ACT
RELEASE

More and more the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. begins to resemble a well-planned, coldly-executed plot which had its inception months ago. What is more, the way in which it was carried out lends credibility to the theory that it was a conspiracy.

This is written with some reservations. The conspiracy theory does not usually attract us about an event of this nature. We are notably unmoved by the critics of the Warren Report on the Kennedy assassination, who seem to believe that not only was more than one man involved, but that the conspiracy they envision included everyone from Communists to the CIA.

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BUT AS the pieces of the puzzle of Dr. King's murder fall into place—and as others refuse to do so—evidence begins to weigh heavily in favor of a conspiracy theory. At the very least, it now seems evident that this was not an impetuous act by a badly deranged man, but the result of a long-range plan.

There is, for instance, the identity of "Eric Starvo Galt." He doesn't exist, apparently, and yet he began to exist as a person around the middle of last year. He established an identity, then carefully used it in building a trail which has led investigators nowhere.

There was also the matter of the rifle so openly dropped near the flop house from which the death blow was struck. To our knowledge, no official has yet said it was the weapon which fired the fatal shot.

Then there was the fictitious chase of a white Mustang by Memphis police car "160." There is a car 160, but it did not chase a Mustang the night of Dr. King's death. The radio reports which seemed to be coming from that car were, again apparently, another plant to draw police off the real scent.

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THE LINE must be drawn in this kind of speculation, but it is obvious to us that only extremists of the far right or left could anticipate immediate benefit from killing Dr. King. The left, by which we mean agents of China, Cuba or, possibly, Moscow, were bound to know that Dr. King's death would be the signal for rioting and pocket insurrections in every major American city. They could reason, with good basis, that the disturbances would badly weaken our society's fabric, making us even less capable of dealing with our obligations abroad and further polarizing the races at home.

The far right could also benefit, again assuming angry reaction in the Negro community. What the far right would hope to gain would be a kind of semi-military takeover of this nation in the name of law and order — which again is not so far-fetched a possibility that it can be automatically discounted even now.

Having said this, it is necessary to restate the qualification that the first assumption — of a lone killer acting out his own psychosis — remains the most probable. With every day which passes without an arrest, however, this assumption is drastically weakened. We are left with "Eric Stravo Galt," a man who plotted long and hard and who is still at large. It smells of organization and conspiracy, and the smell grows stronger.

201-053282

BROAD TRAIL WIT' ELUSIVE END WS APR 14 1968

Movements of King's Killer Traced Step by Step, But...

By JEREMIAH O'LEARY
Star Staff Writer

"The man who killed King is either the world's luckiest amateur or part of a fantastically clever conspiracy," said one weary investigator yesterday as the massive hunt for the slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. continued.

Eleven days after the civil rights leader was slain by a sniper in Memphis, Tenn., the Federal Bureau of Investigation finds itself in the dilemma of possessing a lot of physical evidence but nothing that points to the true identity or whereabouts of the assassin.

From information publicly disclosed and from non-FBI sources, this much can be reported about the evidence in hand, the man being sought and how he prepared for and committed the crime:

- The FBI has three names for the fugitive and all of them are considered to be pseudonyms.
- They have latent fingerprints taken from the Remington Gamemaster 30.06 pump rifle believed to have been the assassination weapon, and from the telescopic sight attached to the gun.
- They have a 1966 white Mustang believed used as the getaway car.
- They have half a dozen or more people who saw the suspected slayer both before and after the fatal shooting at 6:01 p.m. April 4.
- But they do not now know who the gunman really is, where he is, whether he was working alone or as part of a conspiracy.

About the Car . . .

Authorities have pieced together this much information about the car they have connected with the case:

On August 30, 1967 William D. Paisley of Birmingham, Ala., sold a 1966 white Mustang to a man who gave his name as Eric Starvo Galt. On Sept. 6, 1967, "Galt" applied for a Birmingham driver's license under that name and No. 2088947 was mailed to him. On March 1, 1968, Galt requested a duplicate and one was mailed to him at a Birmingham rooming house.

Galt had listed his occupation as unemployed merchant seaman and gave a rooming house address, 2608 Highland Ave., Birmingham. It is a place for transients and Galt did not live there more than six months. He apparently was last a resident in November.

The car and the name Galt became significant when Mrs. Ernest Payne, of Atlanta, Ga., looked out her window between 7 and 9 a.m. Friday, April 5, and saw a man drive the Mustang into a parking lot at Capitol Homes, a low-rent housing project near the State Capitol. The car fit the description of one of two white Mustangs which had been parked in the 400 block of South Main Street, Memphis, around the corner from the motel where King was killed.

Mexico Tourist Stickers

The car evidently was abandoned at the Atlanta spot. It was not until April 11 that it was brought to the attention of the FBI. It bore the red-and-white Alabama license No. 1-38903 traceable to the man who gave his name as Galt.

There was mud and cigaret stubs on the floor and two Mexican tourist stickers on the windows. The FBI can link the car with the events in Memphis but refuses to say how.

The name Galt is now believed to be an alias. An exhaustive check of almost every conceivable form of record in the United States has led to a dead end. No Eric Starvo Galt is listed by police departments, unions, credit or banking institutions or on other records.

But, according to Mrs. Payne's description, "Galt" resembles the man being sought for the slaying of King: dark-haired, dark, neat clothes, pointed nose. The Alabama license records for Galt are considered not inconsistent. The application described him as 5 feet 11, 175 pounds, with blue eyes and brown hair.

Both descriptions are considered close to those given by persons who saw the suspect fleeing from the Memphis flophouse from which the fatal shot was fired. The general description given by Memphis witnesses is 5 feet 8 to 5 feet 11, 26 to 32 years of age, neat dark clothing.

About The Gun . . .

The Remington rifle believed to have been the murder weapon was traced by its serial number to a Birmingham, Ala. sporting goods store. The weapon was acquired from the shop on March 30 by a man who could have been either the suspect or an accomplice.

The man got the Remington by trading another gun for it. The FBI has not disclosed his identity, but it can find no trace of anyone with a name like that given to the Birmingham shop. The acquisition has, however, given the FBI another consistent description and another handwriting specimen.

The next event linking King's death to the mystery man occurred April 4, a few hours after King's well-publicized arrival at the Lorraine Motel for a planning session in connection with a march of striking sanitation workers. King checked into a second-floor balcony room, No. 306, at the Lorraine in the morning.

At 3:15 p.m. that same day, a man who gave his name as John Willard checked into a nameless flophouse in Memphis' 400 block of South Main. Bessie Brewer, the proprietor, took him upstairs, showed him a $10-a-week room on one side of the building. She said he turned down No. 8, which has a kitchenette, remarking: "I only want a sleeping room."

Room No. 5 Chosen

Then she showed him Rooms 4, 5 and 6 on the other side facing the Lorraine Motel. The man known as Willard took Room 5 and paid the weekly $8.50 rent in advance with a $20 bill. Mrs. Brewer recalls that he had a sharp nose, dark hair, a "silly" smile and a neat appearance—unusual for her rundown establishment.

So far as investigators have been able to determine, "John Willard" is another false name.

"Willard" had no luggage and was carrying nothing when he rented the room. The presumption is that during the next hours he went outside and got some things from the Mustang parked on Main Street. Six blocks away, sources report, he bought a pair of binoculars from a place called York's Arms.

In the half hour before King was shot, "Willard" got up from his bed and locked himself in a communal bathroom which has a window facing the balcony of the Lorraine. Willie Anchutz, who lived in the flophouse, tried to get in but his knock was not answered.

According to Memphis Police Director Frank C. Holloman, a former FBI agent, the distance from the bathroom window to King's balcony is 205 feet 3 inches. The angle of fire toward King was 30 degrees to the right and slightly down, an easy shot with a telescopic rifle.

King emerged three times just before 6 p.m. The third time, he mentioned to the Rev. Samuel Kyles that he was tired of restaurants and wanted some "soul food." Kyles invited him home to dinner and King said he would like that. King leaned on the balcony rail, talking to his driver, Solomon Jones, on the ground below. Jones told King it was cold and suggested he wear a top coat.

King replied, "Okay, I will."

Those were his last words. Standing in the bathtub of Bessie Brewer's flophouse, the killer took aim across a junk-pile on a vacant lot, over a row of scrubby trees on an embankment, squinted through the telescopic sight and fired.

Soft-Nosed Bullet Used

King was struck in the lower right jaw by a soft-nosed bullet which coursed through his neck, hit his spine and came to rest in his shoulder. He fell to the balcony deck, unconscious and bleeding profusely, and was dead on arrival at the hospital.

Willie Anchutz heard the shot and looked out his door. He saw a man rush past him in the hall carrying a blue handbag and a long object wrapped in a sheet. Anchutz did not get a good look at the man presumed to be the gunman but remarked, "That sounded like a shot." The man replied, "Yes,. It was."

The fugitive ran out the opposite entrance of the flophouse, ducked into the doorway of the Canipe Amusement Co. at 424 South Main, and dropped the rifle and the bag there. The proprietor, Guy Canipe, saw him abandon the gun and bag, but did not go outside. Other witnesses said the suspect climbed calmly into the white Mustang a few feet beyond and drove away.

It is an easy 8- to 10-hour drive from Memphis to Atlanta, a time element which fits with Mrs. Payne's observation of the man parking the Mustang owned by Galt in the Atlanta housing project.

Within a few hours, the fatal bullet was extracted from King's body and sent to the FBI crime laboratory here, along with the rifle and the bag with all its contents. The FBI has refused to say what was found in the bag or what its laboratory examinations showed.

44-0532732

King's Slayer Remains a Mystery

APR 16 1968

Phony Name Stalls Search

ATLANTA, April 15 (UPI) —Indications mounted today that the most wanted man in the Nation, Eric Starvo Galt, never actually existed but was carefully contrived months before the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

Authorities pressed their search—without a warrant —for the man. But they indicated they feared Galt may be a blind set up to hamper the search for the killer, or killers, of Dr. King.

It was learned that investigators have been unable to trace his existence beyond last summer.

The man who called himself Galt purchased a car in Birmingham, Ala., on Aug. 30. He applied for an Alabama driver's license a week later, at which time he gave his occupation as an unemployed merchant marine seaman. But none of the merchant seamen's unions have any record of him, and it is impossible to work on a ship, officials say, without a union card.

Galt's trail grows cold in Atlanta, where his car — a white Mustang similar to one believed to have been used by the sniper in fleeing Memphis—was found abandoned April 5, the morning after Dr. King was slain.

In Birmingham, meanwhile, rooming house manager Peter Nicholas Cherpes said he had identified for FBI agents a sketch of a man known to him as Galt. Cherpes, 72, told the Birmingham News in a copyrighted interview that the sketch "looked exactly like" Galt.

"He was above the average roomer in dress, talk and appearance," Cherpes said. "He always wore sporty clothes and a tie. He was always pleasant and I never knew of him drinking."

Cherpes said Galt "didn't say much about his family affairs, only that he was divorced. He only talked about the weather, never about politics or racial troubles.

He said Galt stayed at his rooming house at 2608 Highland ave. from Aug. 26 to Oct. 7 last year.

He said that during September, Galt received a prepaid package in the mail from Chicago. He said it weighed 20 to 25 pounds, was about two feet long and one foot wide. The next day, Cherpes said, Galt told him it was the wrong merchandise and he planned to send it back.

(The .30-06 Remington hunting rifle, found near the murder scene and believed to be the death

See SEARCH, A6, Col. 7

[redacted]

201-0832732

Slaying Suspect Veiled Identity

SEARCH, From A1

weapon was sold in Birmingham, according to the manufacturer's serial number records.)

In October, Cherpes said, Galt told him he was leaving for Mobile, Ala., to seek a job. Galt said he expected a letter from Chicago and asked Cherpes to hold it for him.

In February or March, Cherpes said, the letter came from Chicago. He said the envelope was thin and green, with a Chicago post mark.

"I was puzzled for a while where to mail it," Cherpes said. "I didn't have an address (for Galt). So I held the letter for a week, and returned it."

Cherpes said it appeared to him the letter contained a check.

When he received the letter, Cherpes said, he went to his file to look for Galt's registration card and found it. But when FBI agents came to him last week, Cherpes said it was missing.

Cherpes earlier denied knowing Galt. He said this was because the FBI has asked him not to say anything about the man. But he said the FBI had no authority to stop him. His rooming house was bolted and he refused to admit anyone this afternoon.

He said Galt was a natty dresser who always paid his $27 a week room and board in cash, on time.

"When he was here, on the third or fourth day, he asked me if I would drive his car downtown for him to take a driver's test," Cherpes said.

"He was a new man to Alabama and to Birmingham and also a customer," Cherpes continued, "and I wanted to help him on that basis. If he had asked for my recommendation, I would have investigated more closely."

Cherpes said that when Galt arrived at the rooming house, he told him his last job was in the shipyards at Pascagoula, Miss. However, Ingalls Shipbuilding Co. at Pascagoula said it had never hired a man by that name.

Galt told Cherpes he was taking a "long vacation" and expected to stay at the rooming house three or four months. But he only stayed six weeks, Cherpes said.

The only official mention of Galt in connection with the King investigation was in an FBI "locate and notify" bulletin issued, and then withdrawn, in Florida. It said he was 37, 5-foot-11, 175 pounds, blue eyes and brown hair. It said his name was Eric Starvo Galt. It has been speculated, however, that this is a misspelling, and that the name is probably Stavro.

King Probe Is Quiet, Intense

By Gaylord Shaw

MEMPHIS, April 13 (AP)—In the 19 days since the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the lights have burned all night, night after night, in a corner suite on the eighth floor of Memphis' new Federal building.

There, in offices overlooking the wide, muddy Mississippi River, dozens of FBI agents have methodically sifted through what is described as "very substantial" physical evidence.

Exactly what constitutes this evidence is officially unknown, but sources report some of the major items are palm and finger prints, an overnight bag believed to contain clothing and a high-powered rifle with a telescopic sight.

In addition, a white Mustang similar to one that reportedly sped from the assassination scene has been impounded in Atlanta. It has been linked to an Eric Starvo Galt, described as an unemployed merchant seaman who lived in Birmingham until three months ago. The FBI refuses to say why it is looking for Galt.

Robert Jensen, 32, special agent in charge of the Memphis office, wore a stunned smile as he faced reporters. "All I can say is no comment," he repeated to all questions.

Jensen wouldn't even say how many agents have been sent into Memphis. But in a five-minute period late one night, reporters watched 15 agents hurry in or out of the

See SEARCH, A5, Col. 1

FBI Takes Over King Killing Case

SEARCH, From A1

suite through an unmarked side door.

FBI agents have interviewed hundreds of persons in Memphis, Birmingham, Atlanta and elsewhere. They have taken over the records of two rooming houses and at least on gun shop in Birmingham. They have poured through documents in state and local government offices throughout the South.

(Washington Post Staff Writer Paul Valentine reported from Atlanta that more than 100 FBI agents are working on the case in that city alone.)

It seems that everywhere reporters go, the FBI already has instructed them to say nothing.

Across the street from the FBI office, spokesmen for the Memphis police insist their department still is working closely with Federal agents. But from all indication, the FBI has taken over the investigation completely.

The FBI has maintained silence on all aspects of the investigation, but Attorney General Ramsey Clark issued a new statement in Washington last night that dropped his earlier reference to "one man on the run."

Sixteen hours after Dr. King was slain April 4, Clark said evidence "indicates a single individual" was involved. "There is no evidence of a widespread plot," he said.

In the seven-line statement last night, Clark said the FBI was devoting all its resources to the investigation, "working around the clock pursuing every lead."

This could mean that investigators are re-examining the possibility that more than one person was involved in the assassination.

They seemed puzzled about conflicting reports on the number of getaway cars involved and about police radio transmissions detailing a high-speed chase—which apparently never took place—through northeast Memphis 30 minutes after a sniper killed Dr. King with a single rifle shot.

One member of Congress has criticized the FBI's probe.

Noting what he called discrepancies throughout the investigation, Rep. Charles W. Whelan Jr., (R Ohio), said the FBI should "set the record straight."

"The handling of the investigation and the efforts to apprehend the guilty person or persons hardly had been reassuring to a tense and troubled Nation," Whelan said in Washington.

But a Justice Department 12 days to make an arrest in the 1963 slaying of civil rights leader Medgar Evers in Mississippi and more than five months to make arrests in the 1964 murders of three civil rights workers in the same state.

281-0832732

FBI Finds Many Clues In Search for Slayer

MEMPHIS (AP) — [illegible] agents have uncovered "very substantial" physical evidence as they work "around the clock" pursuing every lead" in the search for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassin, says Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark.

"The FBI is devoting every possible resource to this investigation," Clark said last night. "... While it remains impossible to predict when the killer will be arrested, I remain hopeful that it will be seen."

One View Identified

A Justice Department spokesman said the statement issued in Washington was in response to newsmen's queries.

King was shot and killed by a sniper April 4 as he stood outside his motel room here.

At the Memphis rooming house from which the fatal shot was fired, Charles Q. Stevens said FBI agents had shown him two composite drawings of the suspected slayer — one a partial profile and the other a full face view.

Stevens said he could identify the partial view, but not the full face view. He said he saw the gunman flee after hearing a shot fired from a communal bathroom next door to his room. The bathroom window affords a clear view of the motel balcony where King was standing when shot.

And at a rooming house in Birmingham, residents said FBI agents had questioned them about an Eric Starvo Galt, a white man named in an FBI bulletin issued, then withdrawn, in Florida Thursday night.

White Auto Seen

The message sent over the state police teletypewriter network in Florida asked help in locating Galt. It said Galt was driving a white Mustang.

Witnesses in Memphis told investigators earlier they saw a man in a white Mustang drive away from the rooming house.

Records in Alabama show that a man named Galt bought a 1967 Mustang in August, 1967. Other documents disclosed Galt listed his occupation as "merchant seaman, unemployed," when he applied for a driver's license in Birmingham last September giving the Birmingham rooming house as his address.

201-C532732

FBI Seeking Jobless Seaman In King Killing

From News Dispatches

ATLANTA, April 13 — FBI agents investigating the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have been on the trail of Eric Starvo Galt, listed as an unemployed merchant mariner, for nearly a week, United Press International reported today.

Galt's name first reached the public last night when a white Mustang auto registered to him and resembling one that reportedly sped from the King assassination scene, was found parked in an Atlanta apartment complex.

No warrant has been issued for Galt's arrest, but it was learned that the FBI in Miami had issued—and then for unexplained reasons had withdrawn—a "locate and notify" bulletin on Galt yesterday.

Alabama Registry

The Mustang registered to Galt carried Alabama license number 1-38693. A check with Alabama authorities established Galt's address as a rooming house at 2668 Highland ave. in Birmingham, but residents, while recalling Galt, said they had not seen him since November.

In obtaining his driver's license in 1967, Galt listed his occupation as an unemployed merchant mariner.

The FBI replied with a blanket "no comment" to all questions concerning the King investigation, but persons at the Birmingham rooming house said agents were asking "plenty" of questions about Galt last week.

This was four or five days before the Mustang was located in Atlanta.

The only official announcements in the King case have come from Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

Clark said in Washington today that "physical evidence is very substantial" in the investigation.

"While it remains impossible to predict when the assailant will be arrested, I remain hopeful that it will be

Clark said in a statement. "The FBI is [illegible] every possible resource to the [illegible] investigation."

UPI reporters checking with maritime officials in Mobile learned today that agents, in addition to questioning persons at the Birmingham boarding house, had also made a check of the docks long before the Mustang was found.

Union Officials Checked

A spokesman at the Seafarers International Union in Mobile said agents had visited the union offices two days ago and had gone through automated files, without success, in trying to get a lead on Galt.

Officials at the National Maritime Union of America in Mobile said agents had made a similar check there, and the Star Fishing Company, one of the largest firms of its kind in the area, said it also had been visited by agents.

Agents also checked out Coast Guard files in Washington during the day without finding any trace of Galt.

This raised speculation, which again officials refused to confirm or deny, that someone, as early as last September, set about to establish credentials for a fictitious Eric Starvo Galt.

Alabama officials said that at the time he applied for his Alabama license, at the age of 26, he claimed to have had a Louisiana license since 1962, but there is no record that he ever turned it in.

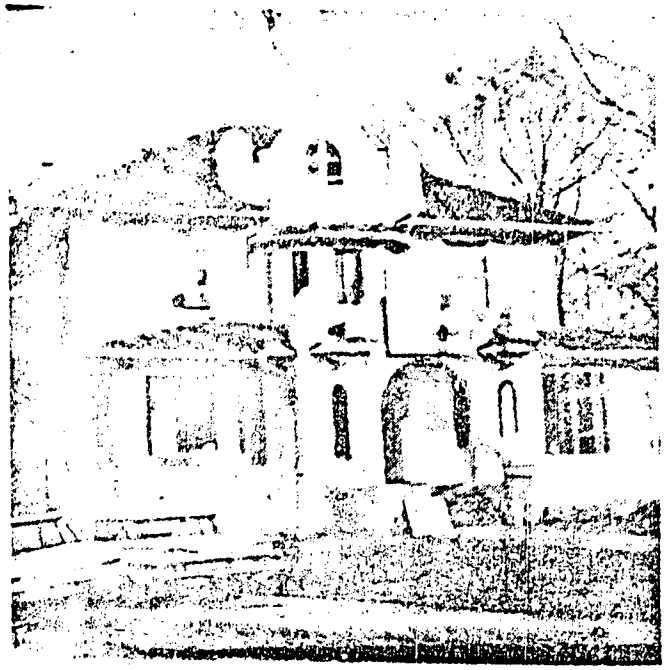
Obtains Tags

The name of Galt was further validated when license tags for the Mustang were obtained under that name on Oct. 11, 1967, in Jefferson County, Ala.

Residents of the Atlanta apartment complex where the car was found remember the driver as a neatly-dressed man who calmly got out of the car, locked it and walked away.

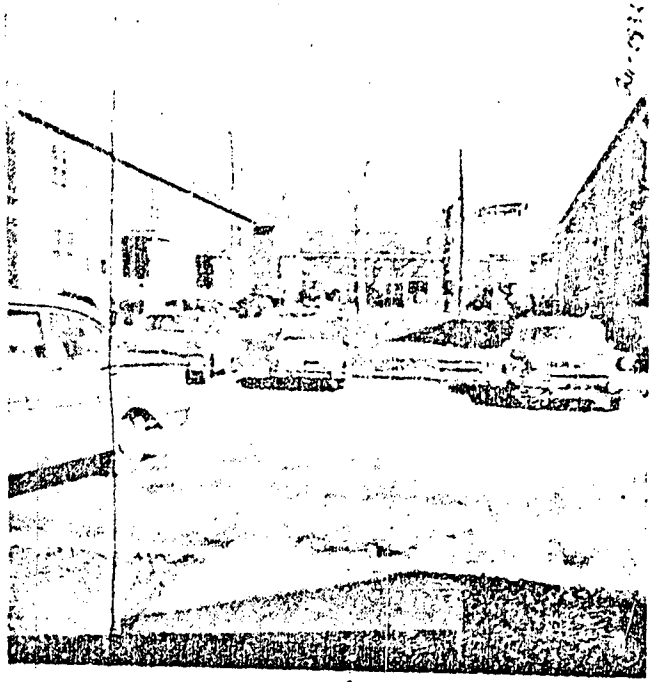
This description roughly [illegible] with one given by occupants of a rooming house in Memphis, where the assassin [illegible] to have checked into the rooming house under the name of "John Willard."

WP APR 13 1



Associated Press

Artist's sketch of suspected slayer. At left is the Birmingham rooming house that is the last known address of Erie S. Galt whom police linked to a white Mustang in Atlanta. At right is where the car was found.



MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The FBI looked, then withdrew, a police order for Eric Starvo Galt, a fleeing man. Also, white man, as the widescale investigation of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., entered its second week.

The bulletin distributed on the statewide police telegram network in Florida last night said Galt was driving a white Mustang. Witnesses in Memphis told investigators earlier they saw a man in a white Mustang drive away from the rooming house from which King was shot April 4.

At about the same time the missing order was sent in Florida, federal agents in Atlanta impounded a white Mustang that had been parked since last Friday at a public housing project near the Georgia state capitol.

Labeled a Mistake

The message, withdrawn with the explanation that it was prepared by mistake, described Galt as a white male, 28 years old, about 5-foot-11 and 170 pounds with blue eyes and brown hair.

The FBI originally rejected the description after initial investigation showed the night of King's slaying.

[illegible] message [illegible] Galt was [illegible] following a [illegible] Alabama [illegible] Birmingham police said [illegible] Legislative Week, Birmingham.

Searchers in Spanish

In Atlanta, the residents who first told police about the abandoned white Mustang said the car bore the same Alabama license as [illegible] by the FBI and bore two stickers which said "Tourista." Earlier reports indicated the investigation had spread to Mexico.

A Birmingham newspaper, the Post-Herald, said residents of the rooming house contacted by the FBI. It added the residents reported they had not seen Galt for about three months and could not recall what type car he drove.

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